



Healthy MercyCare Health Plans

LIVING

Fall 2019

A wellness newsletter for MercyCare members

The ABCs of UTIs

Did you know urinary tract infections (UTIs) are among the most common infections in people? UTIs occur when bacteria enter and infect the urinary tract. UTIs can affect several parts of the urinary tract, but the most common type of UTI is a bladder infection (also known as cystitis).

The body can sometimes fight the bacteria without any problems; however, the infection can cause discomfort and may sometimes spread to the kidneys. Kidney infections are less common but more serious.

Symptoms

- A burning feeling when you urinate
- Passing frequent, small amounts of urine
- Pain or pressure in your back or lower abdomen
- Pelvic pain, in women, especially in the center of the pelvis and around the pubic bone
- Cloudy, dark, bloody, or smelly urine
- Feeling tired or shaky
- Fever or chills (a sign the infection may have reached your kidneys)

Risk Factors

- A previous UTI
- Sexual activity, or a new sexual partner
- Pregnancy

- Changes in vaginal flora or acidity caused by menopause or use of spermicides
- Age (older adults are more likely to get UTIs)
- Reduced mobility (for example, after prolonged bed rest)
- Urinary incontinence
- Urinary catheter placement
- Kidney stones
- Prostate enlargement

When to Seek Medical Care

If you have any symptoms of a UTI, it is appropriate to see your health care professional. Contact your health care professional right away if you have symptoms of a kidney infection.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Antibiotic treatment is usually helpful in treating an infection. Your health care professional will be able to determine if you or your child has a UTI and what antibiotic is needed. If you are prescribed antibiotics, take them exactly how your health care professional recommends. Never skip doses. Drink plenty of water to help clear the bacteria from your body. Talk with your doctor if you have any questions about your antibiotics.



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Fall Prevention: Get Stronger and Stay Healthy Longer

Falls are not a normal part of aging, but they are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for people over age 65. Falls can result in hip fractures, broken bones and head injuries.

Common factors that lead to falls:

- Problems with balance or walking
- Vision changes
- Medicines
- Chronic health conditions

There is good news—most falls can be prevented.

Talk to your health care providers about ways to improve your risk factors. Enroll in a Stepping On Fall Prevention Workshop. And, sign up for Mercyhealth Safe Connect.

Stepping On Fall Prevention Workshop

This seven-week workshop is proven to reduce falls by improving your balance and strength, teaching you about home and environmental safety and addressing other risk factors.

Presented by the Rock County Council on Aging.

(608) 757-5472 • www.co.rock.wi.us/aging

Mercyhealth Safe Connect Personal Emergency Response System

Ideal for elderly and disabled individuals who want to stay in their own homes, and be independent, safe and comfortable. With Safe Connect, there is always a 24/7 connection to family members, friends and emergency services to help you recover from a fall.

(608) 756-6784 • mercyhealthsafeconnect.org



How Best to Manage Your Stress

The best ways to manage stress are through self-care. Follow these tips to ensure you stay well through tough times:

Avoid drugs and alcohol. They may seem to be a temporary fix to feel better, but, in the long run, drugs and alcohol can create more problems and add to your stress instead of taking it away.

Find support. Seek help from a partner, family member, friend, counselor, doctor or clergy person. Having someone to lend a sympathetic, listening ear and share your problems/stress with can help lighten your load.

Connect socially. After a stressful event, it is easy to isolate yourself. Make sure you are spending time with loved ones. Try to plan fun activities with your partner, children or friends.

Take care of yourself.

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Try meditation to clear your head.
- Give yourself a break; for example, treat yourself to a therapeutic massage.
- Try to maintain a normal routine.

Stay active. You can take your mind off your problems with activities like helping a neighbor, volunteering in the community, or taking your dog on a long walk. These can be positive ways to cope with stressful feelings.



Keeping Your Grandkids Safe

Grandparents love to have their grandchildren visit. Some grandparents are even full- or part-time caregivers for their grandkids. But, having young ones around the house requires a special eye toward safety. These tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will help keep grandchildren safe:

Avoid Fires and Scalds

- Install and maintain smoke alarms on all levels of your home. Install carbon monoxide detectors too. Have a fire escape plan.
- When cooking, never leave food unattended on the stove or counter. Always supervise or restrict a child's access to the stove, oven and microwave.

Prevent Poisonings

- Keep medicines, alcohol and cleaning supplies locked safely away. Keep them in their original containers in case you need to call 911 or Poison Control at (800) 222-1222.
- When giving medicine to children, carefully follow directions.
- Safely dispose of unneeded or expired prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and supplements.

Ensure Safety

- Use home safety devices, such as guards on windows that are above ground level, stair gates and guard rails to help keep a busy, active child from taking a dangerous tumble.
- Make sure you have the correct car seat, booster seat, or seatbelt that's appropriate for their age, height and weight.
- Learn life-saving skills like cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Communicate positive safety messages and serve as a model of safe behavior. This can include wearing a bike helmet, wearing your seatbelt and applying sunscreen and donning sunglasses before heading out to enjoy the outdoors.



Too Much Time Online

Today, almost 75% of teenagers own a smartphone that they use to access the internet, watch TV and videos, and download interactive applications (apps). The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests overuse of digital media and screens may place your child at risk of the following:

- **Negative effect on school performance.** Children often use entertainment media at the same time that they're doing other things, such as homework. Such multi-tasking can have a negative effect on school performance.
- **Obesity.** Excessive screen use, including having a TV in the bedroom, can increase the risk of obesity. Kids who watch up to five hours of TV per day are five times more likely to be overweight than teens who watch up to two hours. Viewers are also more likely to snack or overeat while watching screen media.
- **Sleep problems.** Media use can interfere with sleep. Kids who spend more time with social media or who sleep with mobile devices in their rooms are at greater risk for sleep problems. Exposure to light (particularly blue light) and stimulating content from screens can disrupt sleep and have a negative effect on school.
- **Cyberbullying.** All children and teens who are online can be victims. Cyberbullying can lead to short- and long-term negative social, academic, and health issues for both the bully and the target. Fortunately, programs to help prevent bullying may reduce cyberbullying.
- **Sexting and privacy and predators.** Sexting is sending nude or semi-nude images as well as sexually explicit text messages using a cell phone. Teens need to know that once content is shared with others they may not be able to delete or remove it completely. There can be serious legal penalties as well. They may also not know about or choose not to use privacy settings. And, sex offenders may use social networking, chat rooms, e-mail and online games to contact and exploit children.

Children need adequate sleep (8-12 hours, depending on age), at least an hour of daily physical activity and time away from media. Discuss healthy media use with your child. Place consistent limits on hours of media use as well as types of media used. And, don't forget to set a good example ... turn off the TV and put your smartphone on "do not disturb" during media-free time and mealtime with your family.

Is It a Cold or the Flu?

Colds and influenza (flu) are highly contagious respiratory illnesses. Both have similar symptoms, but they differ in severity, as you can see in the chart below. In general, flu is worse than the common cold, with more intense symptoms.

Symptom	Cold	Influenza (flu)
Fever	Rare in adults and older children, but can be as high as 102°F in infants and small children	Usually 102°F, but can go up to 104°F and usually lasts 3 to 4 days
Headache	Rare	Sudden onset and can be severe
Muscle aches	Mild	Usually, and often severe
Tiredness and weakness	Mild	Can last 2 or more weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Sudden onset and can be severe
Runny/stuffy nose	Often	Sometimes
Sneezing	Often	Sometimes
Sore throat	Often	Sometimes
Cough	Mild, often hacking	Usually, and can become severe
Stomach problems	Never	Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea (more common in children)

People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems.

The flu can be mild to severe, but also can be life-threatening. Pneumonia, a lung infection, is a serious complication of the flu that happens in some people. Flu can also make chronic health conditions—like asthma and heart disease—worse.

Treatment and comfort measures for a cold or the flu can also be very different. Both can be helped by drinking plenty of fluids and resting.

For more information, visit mercyhealthsystem.org/flu/.



Get the facts. Know the risks. Protect yourself.

- E-cigarettes are popular with young people. Their use has grown dramatically the last five years. The use of e-cigarettes is unsafe for kids, teens and adults.
- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine and other harmful substances. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s.
- Young people who use e-cigarettes may be more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future.
- Some e-cigarettes look like regular cigarettes, cigars or pipes. Some look like USB flash drives, pens and other everyday items.
- Larger devices such as tank systems, or “mods,” do not look like other tobacco products.
- E-cigarettes are known by many different names. They are sometimes called “e-cigs,” “e-hookahs,” “mods,” “vape pens,” “vapes,” “tank systems,” and “electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).”
- E-cigarettes produce an aerosol by heating a liquid that usually contains nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals that help to make the aerosol.
- The liquid used in e-cigarettes often contains nicotine and flavorings and is sometimes called “e-juice,” “e-liquid,” “vape juice,” or “vape liquid.”
- Users inhale e-cigarette aerosol into their lungs. Bystanders can also breathe in this aerosol when the user exhales it into the air.
- E-cigarette devices can be used to deliver marijuana and other drugs.

The Dangers of E-cigarettes

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), state and local health departments, and other clinical and public health partners are investigating a multi-state outbreak of lung injury associated with e-cigarette product use.

E-cigarettes are electronic devices that heat a liquid and produce an aerosol, or mix of small particles. They come in many shapes and sizes. Most have a battery, a heating element, and a place to hold a liquid. E-cigarettes are known by many different names, including “e-cigs,” “e-hookahs,” “mods” and “vape pens.”

Using an e-cigarette is sometimes called “vaping” or “JUULing.” JUUL e-cigarettes have a high level of nicotine. A typical JUUL cartridge, or “pod,” contains about as much nicotine as a pack of 20 regular cigarettes. These products also use nicotine salts, that allow particularly high levels of nicotine to be inhaled more easily and with less irritation than the free-base nicotine that has traditionally been used in tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

E-cigarettes typically contain nicotine as well as other chemicals that are known to damage health. This is of particular concern for young people, because it could make it easier for them to initiate the use of nicotine through these products and also could make it easier to progress to regular e-cigarette use and nicotine dependence. No matter how it’s delivered, nicotine is harmful.

CDC has released interim recommendations for health care providers, health departments and the public. Until more is known, if you are concerned about these specific health risks, CDC recommends that you consider refraining from using e-cigarette or vaping products. If you are an adult who used e-cigarettes containing nicotine to quit cigarette smoking, do not return to smoking cigarettes. If you have recently used an e-cigarette or vaping product and have any lung injury-related symptoms like those reported to the CDC, see a health care provider.



Start Your Day the Right Way

The first two hours after we wake up can be the most productive of the day. Try these tips to ensure you start your day the right way.

Stay away from your screen. Put yourself first by putting away your phone, TV or computer. Screens can be a major distraction. On average, we spend 90 minutes on our phones every day, which can add up to 3.9 years in a lifetime! The time you spend focusing on yourself first can make a difference in both your productivity and your overall happiness.

Replenish your fluids. Drinking water right away helps your body hydrate its cells, flush toxins and cleanse the colon, allowing for better absorption of minerals. According to the American Heart Association, your heart doesn't have to work as hard if you are hydrated because it allows the blood to pump easier through the blood vessels to the muscles.

Fuel your body. Breakfast gives your brain and body the energy necessary to start the day. Eating a healthy breakfast will improve your performance at work or school, help prevent weight gain, and even make you feel happier.

Stretch it out. Spending 10 minutes on stretching when you first get up will help lengthen those tight muscles, help you feel energized, and increase blood flow to the muscles and brain.

Meditate. It can help reduce stress and the inflammation caused by stress, which is reason enough to start the day by calming the mind. Other studies show it can increase attention and mental quickness in older adults. Meditation can even regulate your blood pressure which can help prevent cardiovascular disease.

Try incorporating these simple morning habits into your routine for a couple of weeks and see if you don't notice an improvement. Your mind, body and spirit may thank you.

Source: Sovereign Silver

Mealtime Tips for Little Ones

Mealtime can be a fun learning experience for little ones. Sitting down as a family to eat can teach children how to eat and help them develop social skills. Having a routine can also help children know what to expect when it is time for meals or snacks. Try incorporating these guidelines with your little one:

Be Clean

- Wash your child's hands before mealtime.
- Put a newspaper or plastic mat on the floor under your child's high chair or booster seat to help with cleanup.

Be Safe

- Sit your child in a high chair or booster seat with a safety strap.
- Watch your child at all times to make sure he or she is safe.

Help Them Focus

- Face your child toward you or other family members at the table.
- Avoid letting TV, videos, cell phones or pets distract your child from eating. (The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children avoid using screens until they are 18 months old, unless video-chatting with friends or family.) These can distract you too! Focus on your child during mealtime.
- Talk with your child during mealtime. This can be a fun time for both of you, and it is important for your child to have your attention.

Guide Their Food Choices

- When your little one first starts eating foods, you may use a spoon or your child may use his or her fingers. As they age, young children will develop different skills to help with mealtime.
- Children may eat different amounts of food each day. This is normal. Talk with your child's pediatrician if you are concerned about how much, or how little, he or she is eating.
- Model healthy eating to help your child learn to try new foods.
- Let your child decide how much to eat. Your child does not have to finish all the food on his or her plate or drink all the liquid in the cup or bottle. Watch your child for signs that he or she is hungry or full.



Pink Eye Facts and Prevention

Pink eye, also known as conjunctivitis, is one of the most common and treatable eye conditions. It is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the thin, clear tissue that lines the inside of the eyelid and the white part of the eyeball. This inflammation makes blood vessels more visible and gives the eye a pink or reddish color.

Key Facts

- Pink eye is one of the most common and treatable eye conditions.
- Most cases of pink eye are mild and get better on their own without treatment.
- Pink eye caused by allergens or irritants is not contagious; however, it's possible to develop a secondary pink eye infection caused by a virus or bacteria that is contagious.
- Most hospitals are required by state law to put drops or ointment in a newborn's eyes to prevent pink eye.

Prevention Tips

- Wash hands really well before and after cleaning, or applying eye drops or ointment to, your infected eye, and after contact with an infected person or items he or she uses. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes. This can worsen the condition or spread it to your other eye.
- Avoid sharing makeup, contact lenses and containers, and eyeglasses. Do not share personal items, such as pillows, washcloths, towels, eye drops, makeup, contact lenses and containers, and eyeglasses.